Building Relationships with Legislators

Guide to Education Advocacy

OREGON SCHOOL BOARDS ASSOCIATION
Dear Colleagues,

A voice is a terrible thing to waste. Especially when it’s the voice of authority on local schools. That’s why I’m asking each of you to make your voice heard at Oregon’s Capitol.

When school board members speak, people listen. You understand what it means to balance competing priorities and keep the competitors happy. You feel the classroom impact when funding shrinks or paperwork grows. In short, you understand in detail the challenges of providing public education.

Your expertise makes you a valuable ally for legislators and other government leaders. So does your experience as an elected representative. Like our legislators, our governor, and our state school superintendent, you carry the profound responsibility of serving constituents. All of this gives you a shared connection, which you can build on to become an effective advocate for schools.

What is needed is just a little more of what you already do. Stay informed about education issues local and not-so local. Personally contact the legislators who represent your district and renew those contacts on a regular basis. Never stop sharing your ideas. Never stop asking how you can help lawmakers make the right decisions for schools.

Most of all, never forget that the Oregon School Boards Association is your ally at the Capitol, as it has been for more than 60 years. OSBA resources like this handbook are plentiful and free. OSBA staff members are knowledgeable and eager to assist. They would love to hear your voice, and they would love to help you share it in the halls of government.

Sincerely,

David Beeson
OSBA president
Legislative Policy Committee member
Silver Falls School Board member
1. GET INFORMED, page 7

My State Senator: ____________________________

_________________________________________

My State Representative: ___________________

_________________________________________

2. CONTACT YOUR LEGISLATORS, page 8

CONTACTED DURING INTERIM:

______________________________

(date) __________ (phone/e-mail/letter/in person)

______________________________

(date) __________ (phone/e-mail/letter/in person)

______________________________

(date) __________ (phone/e-mail/letter/in person)

CONTACTED DURING SESSION:

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(date) __________ (phone/e-mail/letter/in person)

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(date) __________ (phone/e-mail/letter/in person)

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(date) __________ (phone/e-mail/letter/in person)

3. SHARE INFORMATION, page 10

Action (date & description) ____________________________

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Action (date & description) ____________________________

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Action (date & description) ____________________________

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4. INVITE & INVOLVE, page 11

Action (date & description) ____________________________

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Action (date & description) ____________________________

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Action (date & description) ____________________________

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5. COME TO SALEM, page 12

Trips to Salem (date & description) __________

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• Attend the OSBA/COSA LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE, February 21, 2011

• FOLLOW UP WITH OSBA
Let the OSBA Legislative & Public Affairs team know about your conversations with legislators and what responses you receive.
THE FIRST STEP in effective advocacy is to get informed. It is important that you, as an advocate, understand the issues and are comfortable with your knowledge of them. Thorough preparation will make you a more confident and successful advocate.

There are many resources available to help you build your knowledge base. A starting point may be the OSBA website’s Legislative resources (www.osba.org), where you will find a wealth of information:

• OSBA’s Legislative Policies & Priorities (the Priorities are also listed on page 23)
• Look up your legislator
• Track legislation and read daily updates during session

The legislature’s website (www.leg.state.or.us) also provides valuable information:

• Read biographies of your legislators
• Know who legislative leaders are
• Listen to or watch legislative hearings live or archived

Read all the newspaper and magazine articles you can find about education online or at your library.
2. **Contact your legislators**

**BY REGULARLY CONTACTING your legislators and developing a relationship with them, you will be able to influence their decision-making process on education issues.** You can use e-mail, write letters or make telephone calls. Contact your legislators prior to a legislative session to introduce yourself and develop a relationship.

Don't make your first call to your legislators during a legislative session. First, establish a relationship. Then, when you call about an issue during a legislative session, your legislator will be more willing to consider your point of view. Make a friend before you need one!

**WHEN YOU CALL DURING THE INTERIM:**

- Give your name, title and the name of the school board on which you serve.
- Don't be surprised if you have to schedule a time to speak with the legislator; remember, many legislators have full-time jobs during the interim.
- Focus your conversation on one or two top priorities, remembering that your immediate goal is to introduce yourself and offer yourself as a resource for the legislator on education issues.

**WHEN YOU CALL DURING A LEGISLATIVE SESSION:**

- Ask to speak with the senator or representative, but be prepared to discuss your issue with a legislative assistant.
- Give your name, title and the name of the school board on which you serve.
- Focus your call on ONE issue or bill and, if possible, identify the bill by number; briefly state what position you want the legislator to take and be prepared to offer your rationale based on local impact.
- Always ask what position your legislator will be taking on the bill or issue.
- Share with OSBA Legislative and Public Affairs staff what you learn about legislators’ positions on issues.
3. **Share information**

THE NEXT STEP in effective advocacy is to share the information you have gained with your board, your neighbors and your community. No one is more qualified than you to talk about your school district and what is going on within it.

- Formalize legislative advocacy on your board by creating a standing agenda item for legislative updates. Use this time to update your board and – by extension – your community, on issues of legislative importance. Report on your contacts with legislators and encourage the rest of your board to make similar contacts.

- Appoint members of your board as liaisons to local governments (i.e., city or county councils and commissions) to further engage your community leaders by providing education updates and promoting advocacy opportunities.

- Ask to speak to civic and community groups on issues of importance to education. As school board members, you are community leaders, and you can have great influence on your communities’ attitudes.

- Use local media to promote public education and funding for public schools. Talk to the local newspaper’s education reporter to help her or him understand your district and education in general. Meet with the editorial board to encourage a bolder position on the vital role public education plays in your community. Strong relationships with local media representatives mean they know they can rely on you as a resource for education stories.

- Finally, write a guest opinion for the newspaper to convey your message to a broader audience.

4. **Invite and involve your community**

ONE EFFECTIVE LOCAL activity is arranging opportunities for your district to be highlighted as the center of your community. With more than two-thirds of Oregon’s population lacking any formal connection to the public schools in their communities, it is vitally important that we continue to introduce ourselves to our public, including our legislative leaders.

- Invite your legislators and members of the public to visit your schools or to a “taxpayer open house” that highlights successful programs in your district. Arrange for legislators to tour one or more schools to showcase your district’s achievements and successes. Be sure to call or e-mail media representatives in advance and prominently thank your legislators for coming to the school.

- One of the hardest activities – but potentially the most effective – is building and activating a local coalition focused on public schools and school funding. This can be done in several ways, including working with organizations like Oregon PTA or Stand for Children or developing your own method. You can form a coalition with neighboring communities and with other groups in your community. Be sure to invite local leaders to be involved; the broader the coalition, the more powerful it is – but also more difficult to maintain.
5. Come to Salem

AS A WAY to culminate your advocacy efforts and help ensure a successful legislative session for issues affecting public education, go to Salem to help lobby your legislators.

- Schedule a time for your board, administrators or both to travel to Salem to meet with your legislators and push for sustained investment in education and other education priorities.

- Attend the OSBA/COSA Legislative Conference February 21, 2011. This face-to-face lobbying event has proven successful in raising the profile of public education in the legislature. We prepare you for a day of meeting with your legislators to discuss public education priorities.

Follow up with OSBA

LET US KNOW how your conversations go whenever you talk with your legislators and arrange to meet with us when you are in Salem.

OSBA – 800-578-6722 or 503-588-2800
Tricia Yates – tyates@osba.org
Lori Sattenspiel – lsattenspiel@osba.org
Morgan Allen – mallen@osba.org

Tips for Communication

WHEN CONTACTING YOUR legislators, always:

- IDENTIFY YOURSELF. Make sure the legislator understands who you are and which school district, education service district or community college you represent.

- BE BRIEF. Get to the point quickly, and be specific.

- USE A LOCAL ANGLE. Explaining how a bill will positively or negatively affect local schools can be very persuasive. Remember that you’re not only the legislator’s constituent, you are also a fellow elected official.

- THANK LEGISLATORS for meeting with you and for their support or consideration, even if they are against you. You may need their vote in the future on another matter.
Maps

Below is a map of the first floor of the Capitol. Many legislators’ offices are on the second and third floors of the building. Crossing between wings on upper floors may require you to go through the visitor’s gallery.

Please refer to the floor plans online for specific information and other floors. (www.leg.state.or.us/capinfo/floorplans)

Offices

Governor
160 State Capitol
900 Court Street
Salem, OR 97301-4047
503-378-4582
www.governor.oregon.gov

State Superintendent of Public Instruction
Susan Castillo
255 Capitol Street NE
Salem, OR 97310
503-947-5600
superintendent.castillo@state.or.us

State Senators
Senator [Name of State Senator]
State Capitol, S-# [Office number]
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1187 or 800-332-2313
sen.firstnamelastname@state.or.us

State Representatives
Representative [Name of State Representative]
State Capitol, H-# [Office number]
900 Court Street NE
Salem, OR 97301
503-986-1187 or 800-332-2313
rep.firstnamelastname@state.or.us

PARKING: Oregon School Boards Association members can park in the Local Government Center parking lot on the corner of Court and 12th, NE. Come to the fourth floor to get a permit.

Visitor Services (Kiosk area) in the State Capitol has parking information: 503-986-1388
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<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Jan. 10, 2011</td>
<td>Oregon Legislative Assembly convenes – expected to adjourn after three days</td>
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<td>Feb. 1, 2011</td>
<td>Oregon Legislative Assembly expected to resume</td>
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<td>Final date for Governor to release his budget</td>
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<td>Feb. 21, 2011</td>
<td>OSBA/COSA Legislative Conference, Salem</td>
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<td>Mid-February 2011</td>
<td>March quarterly revenue forecast expected</td>
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<td>Mid-March 2011</td>
<td>Joint Committee on Ways &amp; Means co-chair budget expected</td>
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<td>Mid-May 2011</td>
<td>June quarterly revenue forecast expected</td>
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<td>June 2011</td>
<td>Traditional target for legislative session to adjourn</td>
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**March 2011**  Joint Ways & Means co-chair budget expected this month

**April 2011**

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**May 2011**  Quarterly revenue forecast this month

**June 2011**  Traditional target for session to adjourn this month

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OSBA’s Legislative Priorities

Student Achievement
OSBA will vigorously advocate for laws prioritizing support for student achievement to ensure that every student is prepared for college, apprenticeships, careers and productive citizenship.

Shared Accountability
OSBA will urge the Governor, Legislature, State Superintendent of Public Instruction and State Board of Education to join local school districts and education service districts in shared accountability for student achievement.

Funding
OSBA will vigorously advocate for adequate, stable funding as defined by the Quality Education Model to meet student achievement goals. OSBA will vigorously advocate for state and local tax reform, including kicker reform, that would increase support for schools. OSBA will actively pursue new state funding for K-12 capital construction.
To improve student achievement through advocacy, leadership and services to Oregon public school boards.

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Salem, Oregon 97301
P.O. Box 1068
Salem, Oregon 97308
800-578-6722 | 503-588-2800
www.osba.org

Kevin McCann, OSBA Executive Director
Tricia Yates, Associate Executive Director, Legislative & Public Affairs

OSBA Legislative Team

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